DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 451 359 CE 081 504

TITLE	Report to the Congress of the United States on the Activities of the Office of Correctional Job Training and Placement during Fiscal Year 1999.
INSTITUTION	National Inst. of Corrections (Dept. of Justice/LEAA), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2000-02-00
NOTE	17p.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.nicic.org/pubs/2000/015957.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Legal/Legislative/Regulatory Materials (090)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; Adult Learning; Agency Cooperation; Agency Role; Annual Reports; Basic Skills; Clearinghouses; Conferences; Coordination; Correctional Education; *Correctional Rehabilitation; Curriculum Development; Data Collection; Delivery Systems; Educational Needs; Employment Potential; Employment Qualifications; *Federal Programs; Focus Groups; Information Dissemination; Information Services; Institutional Personnel; *Job Placement; Job Skills; *Job Training; Needs Assessment; Outcomes of Education; Participant Satisfaction; Partnerships in Education; Postsecondary Education; Private Sector; Professional Development; Program Effectiveness; *Public Agencies; Public Sector; Self Evaluation (Individuals); Skill Development; *Staff Development; Technical Assistance; Workshops

ABSTRACT

During fiscal year 1999, the Office of Correctional Job Training and Placement (OCJTP) conducted numerous activities related to its primary functions, which are as follows: (1) coordinate federal departments' and agencies' efforts related to correctional job training and placement; (2) provide training to develop staff competencies needed by state and local agencies to assist offenders and ex-offenders in gaining marketable occupational skills and job placement; (3) provide technical assistance related to development of offender employability to state and local training and employment agencies; and (4) collect and disseminate information on offender job training and placement programs and outcomes. The following were among the specific activities conducted by OCJTP within those 4 functions: (1) cosponsored the first national forum for administrators of offender job training and placement services; (2) convened 12 focus groups to elicit recommendations from inmates, ex-offenders, and corrections staff and administrators regarding offenders' employment needs and skills needed by professionals to meet offenders' employment needs; (3) initiated pilot testing of self-directed interactive software to help states replicate a prison industries program developed in the state of Washington; and (4) developed an 120-hour competency-based training program for corrections staff. (Focus group and survey results are appended, along with training participants' self-reported increases in skills.) (MN)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 451 359

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Corrections

Report to the Congress of the United States on the Activities of the Office of Correctional Job Training and Placement During Fiscal Year 1999

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

February 2000

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CE 081 504

Contents

Introduction 2
Background 2
Status of Correctional Job Training and Placement Programs in the United States 2
  Federal Bureau of Prisons 2
  State and Local Efforts 3
National Forum 5
Focus Groups 6
Office Coordination 6
Interagency Coordination 7
Cooperative Agreements 8
  Literature Review - Job Retention 8
  Software Development for Program Replication 8
Training 9
  Development of a Curriculum for Offender Workforce Development Specialists 9
  Offender Employment Specialist Training 9
  Workshops at Conferences 10
  Workshops through Technical Assistance 10
Clearinghouse/Information Services 11
  Update of Annotated Bibliography 11
  Information Requests 11
  Program Focus Documents 12
Appendix A. Focus Group and Survey Results 13
Appendix B. Training Participants' Self-Reported Increase in Skills 15

Introduction

As mandated in its enabling legislation, the National Institute of Corrections' Office of Correctional Job Training and Placement hereby submits its annual report to Congress on its activities during fiscal year 1999 (October 1, 1998, through September 30, 1999).

Background

The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 directed the U.S. Attorney General to establish an Office of Correctional Job Training and Placement (OCJTP) within the Department of Justice. OCJTP was created as a vehicle to encourage, support, and advance job training and job placement programs that provide services to offenders and ex-offenders.

OCJTP was established in March 1995 within the National Institute of Corrections (NIC), an organization whose primary purpose is to assist state and local corrections by providing technical assistance, training, and information services. NIC's service delivery system provides the necessary organizational support and field contacts to carry out the functions of OCJTP.

As defined by its enabling legislation (P.L. 103-322), OCJTP's functions include:

- Coordinating efforts of the Department of Labor (DOL), the Department of Justice (DOJ), and other federal agencies in the areas of correctional job training and placement.
- Providing training to develop staff competencies needed by state and local agencies to assist offenders and ex-offenders in gaining marketable occupational skills and job placement.
- Providing technical assistance related to the development of offender employability to state and local training and employment agencies.
- Collecting and disseminating information on offender job training and placement programs, accomplishments, and employment outcomes.

Status of Correctional Job Training and Placement Programs in the United States

Preparing offenders for the workforce and helping them obtain employment gained increased focus during the 1990s, and offender job training and placement programs continue to gain momentum nationally. Creation of OCJTP in 1995 exhibited the need for assistance programs and a coordination point for such efforts. Programs continue to evolve and improve at the federal, state, and local levels, and a national perspective is only possible by highlighting some of the progress and programs that are under way. It is expected that over time a clearer picture will emerge as operating programs are identified and brought into the network of agencies and service providers that continues to develop. Highlights of federal, state, and local activities follow.

Federal Bureau of Prisons

As in many other areas of corrections, the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP) has assumed a leadership role in the area of offender job training and placement. In 1996, it established an Inmate Placement Program Branch (IPPB) to develop programs to enhance post-release employment opportunities for federal inmates. Activities include mock job fairs in federal correctional

institutions, preparation of employment portfolios of relevant credentials for pre-release inmates, posting job openings on prison bulletin boards, establishing employment resource centers in prisons, training staff to serve as offender employment specialists, and providing information via the Internet.

Mock Job Fairs. Fifty-five mock job fairs were held in 44 federal prisons during fiscal year 1999. Over 2,600 inmates have participated in FBOP job fairs since they began in 1997, and 850 companies, educational organizations, and community service agencies have partnered with the prisons to provide these programs.

Many federal prisons have adopted annual job fair commitments, and some hold several job fairs each year. FBOP mock job fairs provide inmates within 18 months of release with the opportunity to interview with employers from surrounding communities. Each inmate participates in three to five interviews, which are critiqued by the interviewers. Some FBOP institutions combine the mock job fairs with information job fairs, where representatives of relevant agencies (e.g., labor, veterans benefits, motor vehicle) are available to answer questions and provide materials. Hundreds of inmates rotate through the information job fair, while 20 to 30 participate in interviews.

Posting Job Openings on Prison Bulletin Boards. Eleven companies are now posting job openings on bulletin boards within federal prisons. A soft drink bottling company, a hotel chain, furniture manufacturing companies, and a roofing company are among those involved in this effort. Inmates close to release are encouraged to write to the companies to schedule post-release interviews.

Staff Training. During fiscal year 1999, FBOP provided 40 hours of training to 30 staff members who work in the areas of inmate employment enhancement. Three classes are scheduled during 2000 to train 90 additional staff.

Information Services. The IPPB's webpage—www.unicor.gov/placement—provides online assistance relevant to inmate post-release employment. The website contains links to a *Mock Job Fair Handbook* and an independent evaluation of an FBOP mock job fair, both of which can be downloaded. It also offers other information related to offender employment, such as state agencies providing high school equivalency diplomas (GEDs) and the federal bonding program. Future plans include a pilot test of placing inmate resumes on the Internet.

State and Local Efforts

Some of the state and local efforts related to offender job training and placement that have not been mentioned in earlier OCJTP reports are summarized below to present an overview of activities taking place across the nation. Others will be highlighted in future OCJTP reports.

- Several state correctional systems are examining the FBOP job fair program, and several regional jails in California, Maine, and West Virginia have held successful job fairs based on the model and assisted by IPPB staff.

- In Maryland, an Inmate Post-Release Opportunities project chaired by a Baltimore County

circuit court judge is gathering information on national models suited to Maryland, identifying programs within the state that contribute to improved employability of released inmates, and working with the private sector to provide job opportunities for offenders.

- The Knox County (Tennessee) Sheriff's Department operates a Community Alternatives to Prison Program/Day Reporting Center funded by the Tennessee Department of Corrections that combines assessment and supervision with mental health; drug and alcohol treatment; and vocational, educational, and transitional assistance for felony offenders. The program was started in 1986, enrolls 85 felons yearly, and has seen positive results. In fiscal year 1999, 100% of clients who took the GED test passed, 89% of drug screens were negative, and 90% of able clients obtained gainful employment.

- The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC), which began providing job readiness training to inmates in 1984, operates a pre-release program at each of its prisons to assist inmates in transitioning to the community. The program consists of three weeks of ½-day training sessions focusing on job search/employment readiness, life coping skills, community resources and health, and resume development. In 1996, the DRC established in-prison job fairs and, in 1997, expanded the job fair model to include videoconferencing technology that allows employers to interview inmates from community sites rather than going to the prisons. This enhancement is particularly advantageous to inmates incarcerated a long distance from their home communities who had little hope that a hometown employer would travel to a distant in-prison job fair. Since 1996, more than 2,500 inmates have participated in 180 job fairs (either in-prison or by videoconference), and more than 2,300 were offered either employment or an invitation to interview after release.

- The North Carolina Department of Corrections' (DOC) efforts to provide work-related activities and training to prepare inmates for release intensified over the past 7 years. Currently more than two-thirds of its 30,000 inmates are assigned to at least one of five work-related activities: pre-employment and vocational training, correctional industries, community work programs, work release, and inmate construction crews. The DOC is developing a new work-related transition initiative called Jobstart that will coordinate DOC services and programs to prepare inmates to secure and retain gainful employment and leave prison with a realistic plan for reentering society. The program will soon be field tested at five sites.

- The nonprofit South Forty Corporation, which is dedicated to "helping the most disadvantaged people in society achieve economic self-sufficiency and move into the mainstream of society in their communities," has operated a pre-release program at a New York City correctional facility for women since 1978. Upon release, the women are referred to South Forty's career development program where they, and men and women referred by other criminal justice agencies, receive job counseling, on-the-job training, and personal guidance. South Forty's transitional program provides pre-release and post-release services to Rikers Island prison inmates through a contract with the New York City Department of Corrections. In 1995, it began providing vocational training and job placement services to New York State Department of Correctional Services' work-release inmates, with the goal of placing 300 male and female inmates in full-time employment each year; to date it has exceeded its obligations by placing more than 2,300 offenders. In 1999, South Forty began two projects under contract with the

New York City Probation Department to provide job placement and support services to probationers and to parents and family of juvenile delinquents.

National Forum

On March 14-17, 1999, OCJTP and The Safer Foundation, with headquarters in Chicago, Illinois, cosponsored the first national forum for administrators of offender job training and placement services. Held in Chicago, the forum provided administrators an opportunity to identify current issues and strategies and facilitated the beginning of a national network to effect improvements in offender job training and placement services.

A planning session for the forum in Alexandria, Virginia, was attended by administrators representing jails, prisons, probation, parole, correctional industries, correctional education, state employment security departments, community colleges, and nonprofit organizations. They identified four major interest areas to be addressed at the forum by national leaders in the provision of offender job training and placement services. The issues included enabling legislation, networking and partnerships, funding sources, and job retention of both offenders and the employment specialists who work with them. Other information shared at the forum, including program descriptions, unique aspects of programs, and participants' areas of expertise, was entered into a database maintained by OCJTP for use by other offender job training and placement administrators.

Several recent national legislative initiatives that represent potential public funding sources for offender employment programs were discussed at the forum, including:

- The Workforce Investment Act, targeted to the unemployed and/or unemployable, to build a bridge from dependency to self-sufficiency through employment. Offenders are a named category in this act. Funding from the federal government to state governments, which are accountable for compliance with the act, will flow to local governments which will be responsible for establishing local Workforce Investment Boards and for contracting with providers to offer services through "one-stop centers."[1] Interim regulations for implementation of the Workforce Investment Act are in effect until the final regulations are issued in spring or summer 2000.

- The Welfare Reform Act of 1996 represents a shift in national policy from income maintenance to economic self-sufficiency. The $16.3 billion Temporary Aid to Needy Families and the $3 billion Welfare to Work Initiative offer new opportunities for offender employment programs. The focus of these programs is to provide funding to states and local communities to help the hardest to employ find and keep jobs by providing transitional assistance. States have substantial flexibility in how these funds are spent and are increasingly interested in funding programs for the "hardest-to-serve" populations and non-custodial parents, both of whom are represented in correctional populations. Meaningful tax credits are available for hiring

[1]The "one-stop" career center system was developed by the U.S. Department of Labor to address the frustrations of job seekers and employers who had to search many sources to find quality information on available employment and training programs. It integrates the fragmented array of employment, training, and education programs into a service-delivery system for job seekers and employers in partnership with states and localities.

employees under these programs.

In a keynote address, the Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services remarked on the parallel between the status of offenders and welfare recipients. Current welfare reform represents a paradigm shift from fostered dependency and institutionalized poverty to a system that restores the value of work and helps former welfare recipients enter the social mainstream through the workforce.

Private funding available for offender employment programs through foundations and corporations was also a topic at the forum. For example, the current funding priorities of the Center on Crime, Community and Culture, which is part of the Open Society Institute, include broad-based advocacy programs that focus public attention on issues related to prisons and community reintegration of offenders; media programs to change the image of offenders; and private-public partnerships that promote the long-term sustainability of programs.

Extensive evaluations of the forum revealed administrators placed the most value on the opportunity to network with peers from across the nation, exchange information, gain new ideas, and identify new job training and placement resources and strategies. It was suggested that future forums include judges and more administrators of departments of correction, correctional industries programs, sheriffs departments, and state departments of education and labor. Based on the success of this first national forum, OCJTP is committed to the development of a national network of program administrators and providing other opportunities to share information.

Focus Groups

During the first quarter of 1999, 12 focus groups were convened to elicit recommendations from inmates, ex-offenders, first-line corrections staff, and corrections administrators regarding 1) the employment needs of offenders, and 2) the skills needed by professionals to meet offenders' employment needs. In addition to the 92 participants in the focus groups, which were held in Colorado, Illinois, Utah, Maryland, and Texas, 32 others responded via a survey. The information gained from the process will help OCJTP in curriculum development currently under way and in planning future projects. A sampling of views commonly expressed is given in Appendix A.

Office Coordination

NIC's OCJTP has been exploring options for enhancing its staff resources and expanding services, which proved partially successful during fiscal year 1999.

- From October 1998 to August 1999, the OCJTP office was assisted by a full-time intern from the University of Tennessee's graduate-level Rehabilitation Counseling Program.
- A full-time corrections specialist assigned to OCJTP joined the NIC training academy staff in June 1999 for a 2-year period through the Intergovernmental Personnel Act, which allows the temporary assignment of federal, state, and local employees to another agency. This individual, on loan from the Washington State Department of Corrections, is coordinating OCJTP training activities.
- OCJTP supported an individual's application for a 2-year postgraduate fellowship to the Open Society Institute to conduct a study; develop a curriculum; and provide training, information dissemination, technical assistance, and evaluation related to offender job retention nationally. Had the application been successful, it was anticipated that recommendations from the study

would be implemented by three nationally recognized programs that prepare offenders for the workplace and help them find employment.

Also during the year, the OCJTP administrator continued efforts to provide public information, including the following activities.

- In September 1999, a national perspective on offender job training and placement was presented to the Maryland Department of Budget and Management's Council on Management and Productivity, which is conducting a study to help inmates gain productive employment upon release from the Maryland prison system. Follow-up meetings will be held to discuss assistance available from OCJTP.
- In response to an inquiry of the U.S. Attorney General regarding offender job training and placement services and at the request of the Director of FBOP, the NIC director and OCJTP administrator met with the U.S. Attorney General and staff and the FBOP director and staff. The OCJTP administrator described the activities of OCJTP and studies of the impact offender job training and placement have on recidivism.
- At the request of the Volunteers of America's national office, OCJTP provided documents and conducted a teleconference with administrators from across the nation who are associated with Volunteers of America to provide an overview of the services available from OCJTP. Volunteers who have teamed with corrections agencies to provide offender job training and placement services are eligible for, and have participated in, OCJTP's offender employment specialist training program at the NIC training academy in Longmont, Colorado.

Interagency Coordination

In April 1999, OCJTP facilitated an introductory meeting with the administrators of FBOP's IPPB and the Veterans Administration's (VA) National Office of Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSR) in the Mental Health Group. The VA's PSR division is responsible for 250 work-based programs and 48 therapeutic residential programs operated out of VA medical centers throughout the country. The PSR office had been independently developing an outreach project for formerly incarcerated female veterans and trying to identify the number of incarcerated veterans when it became aware of NIC and OCJTP.

Successive meetings during fiscal year 1999 led to the following results.

- An interagency work group was formed to explore how programs administered by the VA's PSR division could help transition veterans on parole and probation into productive community participation.
- The PSR initiated participation in the Federal Bonding Program and now offers through its programs federal liability bonds for the hard to employ to increase participation in its community-based employment programs.
- The PSR began participation in the FBOP's mock job fair program.
- The PSR and NIC's Community Corrections Division agreed to pilot test meetings of local PSR managers and chiefs of probation in large urban counties. Productive meetings took place in the initial test sites of Dallas and Houston, Texas, and another meeting is planned for Cook County (Chicago), Illinois. Staff of PSR and the FBOP's Community Corrections Branch are

exploring similar liaisons to benefit veterans who are on federal work release, probation, and parole.

- The PSR attended a national conference on female offenders in September 1999 as well as NIC training on the subject and is establishing contacts with community organizations that provide support services to formerly incarcerated women.
- The VA continues to develop mechanisms for capturing accurate data on incarcerated veterans and has been working with various agencies, including the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

The series of meetings held during the year were attended by officials of various VA offices, NIC, FBOP, and veteran service organizations, who have agreed to continue to explore the issues of "errant" veterans and what services and treatment could be provided within existing guidelines.

Cooperative Agreements

Literature Review - Job Retention

In December 1998, OCJTP made available an updated review of the literature on offender job retention. Developed by an academician through NIC sponsorship, the review analyzes selected studies and synthesizes the results to 1) provide a basis for practitioners to develop practices and guidelines that facilitate the placement of and job stability of ex-offenders, and 2) establish a foundation for future research into the relationships between crime and employment. The literature review will assist human resource development professionals, employment specialists, and corrections administrators in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs that facilitate transition of inmates from corrections facilities to productive roles in the community and ultimately result in reduced recidivism.

Software Development for Program Replication

In September 1999, OCJTP began pilot testing a self-directed, interactive software program with which states can replicate a prison industries program developed by the Washington State Corrections Clearinghouse. That program creates and maintains a statewide directory of community service providers in printed and electronic formats. Development and maintenance of such a directory provides a public service at reduced cost and opportunities for inmates to work and learn marketable computer, business, and interpersonal communication skills. After the pilot tests in Maryland and Oregon, the software program will be available to other jurisdictions. As state correctional industries across the nation implement this program, a national network of community service providers will enable referrals throughout the country.

Training

Development of a Curriculum for Offender Workforce Development Specialists

During fiscal year 1999, OCJTP and the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee met numerous times regarding their cooperative effort (formalized through a FY98 interagency agreement) to develop a 120-hour competency-based training program for corrections staff whose work is dedicated to assisting offenders' entry and/or transition back into the labor market and job retention. The curriculum will teach 12 competencies in the use of occupational, educational, and labor market information; current technology for accessing career information delivery systems; and assessment instruments and interest inventories for preparing offenders to make informed decisions about occupations.

Individuals from state, local, public, and private organizations providing related offender services will be eligible for the training. They will participate in 3 weeks of classroom training, including a train-the-trainer component, interspersed by 2 weeks of practical experience. Those completing the prescribed training will serve as a trainer and resource person for their agency or organization.

OCJTP will seek to have the Offender Workforce Development Specialist (OWDS) curriculum meet all competencies and course requirements for Career Development Facilitator (CDF) as established by the National Board of Certified Counselors' Council for Credentialing and Education (CCE). This organization provides credentialing for paraprofessionals in the field of career development. Those persons successfully completing the OWDS training will be eligible to apply for personal certification as a CDF.

Pilot training programs using the new curriculum are scheduled for delivery in May, June, and July 2000. The pilot will be attended by five-person teams from five pre-selected jurisdictions, a CCE reviewer, and representatives from other federal agencies serving the offender population.

Offender Employment Specialist Training

During fiscal year 1999, OCJTP and the NIC Academy conducted three 36-hour training programs in Longmont, Colorado, which were attended by a total of 89 offender employment specialists from 34 states and Guam. The participants represented federal, state, and local corrections, labor, education, correctional industry, academia, and private sector organizations who work together cooperatively, contractually, or statutorily to provide job skills training and placement services for offenders. Teams of two people attended from most participating jurisdictions—one person from public corrections and the other from another government agency or the private sector.

In August 1999, a regional training program was conducted in Seattle, Washington, for 24 offender employment specialists from Idaho and Washington State. Participants were staff of state department of corrections, state employment agencies, state departments of labor, youth offender programs, community colleges, county corrections, jails, federal probation, and private and nonprofit agencies.

During fiscal year 1999, the Offender Employment Specialist curriculum and training program were endorsed by the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals.

Evaluation of Training. Formal evaluation procedures implemented during each Offender Employment Specialist training program showed an overall cumulative increase of 26% in participants' skills. Appendix B shows the primary skills measured and the average percentage increase in skills from the first day of training to the last, based on participant self-report questionnaires, for each of the three Longmont programs and the Seattle program.

Follow-Up Questionnaires. Follow-up questionnaires were sent to participants in two of the training programs 4 months later. The questionnaires sought information on the success of, or barriers to, implementation of action plans developed during the training program, the extent of collaboration between training participants and other agencies following the training, changes experienced as a result of attending the training, and the status of resource availability.

Thirty-seven of 59 trainees in the October and February programs, or 62%, returned the questionnaires. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents identified one or more steps taken to improve offender job training and placement services as a result of an action planning process initiated at the training program. Experiences most frequently cited by participants as a result of the training included 1) increased skills and knowledge related to the offender employment specialist's field, 2) development of new relationships outside their organizations, 3) contact with peers from the training, 4) sharing of new skills and knowledge related to the offender employment specialist field within their organization, 5) increase in personal self-confidence, and 6) development of working partnerships outside their organizations. Participants most often identified the barriers to implementing improvements as 1) lack of funding, 2) time constraints, and 3) staffing levels/allocations.

Workshops at Conferences

Workshops based on the 36-hour OCJTP Offender Employment Specialist training were presented at conferences of three professional associations during fiscal year 1999. The workshops covered assessment of offenders, pre-employment and job readiness, job development, marketing, community networking, one stops, job fairs, portfolio development, and job placement and retention. The workshops were conducted at conferences of the following groups.

- Arizona Correctional Education Association—a 6-hour workshop in Mesa, Arizona, for 15 participants.
- National Association of Workforce Development Professionals—a 6-hour workshop in San Diego, California, for 60 participants.
- American Correctional Association—a 7-hour workshop in Denver, Colorado, for 24 participants.

Workshops through Technical Assistance

The NIC Community Corrections Division provided four workshops related to offender job training and placement through its technical assistance program.

- An 8-hour workshop was presented for 72 probation and parole officers, pre- and post-release counselors, drug treatment counselors, and community-based treatment personnel attending the Treatment Trends Institute in Allentown, Pennsylvania. It addressed strategies for implementing a sound transition program and other subjects important to post-release success,

such as job placement, job satisfaction, self-improvement opportunities, and access to community resources.

- A 3-day onsite workshop for state-directed and private contractual service administrators and practitioners in Ohio resulted in recommended improvements to maximize post-release success of offenders via job training and placement services.
- A 2-day workshop was conducted to assist 100 contract employees who provide transitional services for the FBOP's South Central Regional Office, Community Corrections Sanctions Center in enhancing job development and placement programs.
- A 3-day workshop was conducted for the Wisconsin Department of Corrections to increase the knowledge and technical skills of 28 staff from throughout the state who work in offender employment and advance the development of a coordinated strategy for service delivery.

Clearinghouse/Information Services

OCJTP clearinghouse services are housed within the NIC Information Center, which is operated by a contractor in Longmont, Colorado. Services provided by the Information Center respond to Congress's mandate for OCJTP to collect and disseminate information on offender job training and placement programs, training accomplishments, and employment outcomes. NIC Information Center holdings pertaining to these subjects number 698 items, 43 of which were added to the collection during fiscal year 1999.

These materials cover a wide range of subjects, including offender job counseling, training in job readiness skills, vocational education, inmate industries, job placement, job retention, career development, and related services for offenders. Formats include training curriculums, program descriptions and evaluations, and offender self-help materials. Prominent in the collection are unpublished materials developed by practitioners.

Update of Annotated Bibliography

During the fiscal year, an annotated bibliography listing nearly 400 OCJTP-relevant titles available from the NIC Information Center was updated, adding 85 new entries. Document citations are presented in five major categories: vocational education, inmate industries, offender/ex-offender employment, multidisciplinary materials, and videotape resources. Subgroupings within these categories steer the reader to particular types of material, such as curriculum materials and outcome studies/evaluations. The new edition includes Internet addresses to locate documents if available.

Information Requests

Between October 1, 1998, and September 30, 1999, the NIC Information Center served 219 people seeking materials on offender job training, placement, and related topics. Forty percent requested either the OCJTP bibliography or materials listed in it; 5% of requests were for staff training material. Requests originated from 43 states, the District of Columbia, Australia, Canada, Malta, and Portugal.

Program Focus Documents

The National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Education's Office of Correctional

Education, and OCJTP entered into interagency agreements in 1997 and 1998 to support research, development, publication, and dissemination of Program Focus publications. Each publication features a promising program for integrating offenders into the workforce that is thought to have significant local impact and potential for national replication.

In August 1999, *Washington State's Corrections Clearinghouse: A Comprehensive Approach to Offender Employment* was published and disseminated to the field. The Corrections Clearinghouse (CCH), a unit of the Washington State Employment Security Department headquartered in Olympia, Washington, illustrates the state's commitment, dedication of resources, and demonstrated results in preparing offenders for the workplace and finding employment for them. Founded in 1976, CCH provides a continuum of services to prison inmates that begins with an employability assessment during incarceration and ends with job placement after release and ongoing assistance. CCH contracts with community-based organizations for offender job search assistance and job placement and has seen reduced recidivism among offenders served by the program.

Appendix A
Focus Group and Survey Results

Twelve focus groups were convened to elicit recommendations regarding the employment needs of offenders and the skills needed by professionals to meet those needs. Ninety-two offenders and corrections staff participated in the focus groups, and another 32 responded to the questions via a survey. The views expressed are summarized below.

Greatest Employment Needs of Offenders

- Many offenders lack education, job experience, and marketable skills needed to obtain suitable jobs that can support a family—not minimum-wage jobs.
- Some do not know what they like to do, what they can do, or much about the workplace. They cannot explain their talents, skills, and strengths and do not know what is possible for them or where to start.
- Some offenders are functionally illiterate. They have no skills, no GED, and no diploma.
- They do not have even basic life skills and do not know how to ask for help, e.g., housing, transportation, budgeting, obtaining funds to buy tools needed for a job.
- They present unconventional appearances, such as dress, hygiene, hair style, body piercing, tatoos.
- They have little or no self-esteem, fear and uncertainty of the unknown, thinking errors, and addiction problems. Little or no counseling is provided.
- Many leave prison with no job search skills and without any formal preparation for work. They are not able to transfer skills they learned in prison. Many have unrealistic expectations.
- There is little support in the community when offenders are released from prison.
- They do not know how to use the system, how to access assistance, or how to brokerage the services that are available.

Skills Needed by Professionals to Meet Offenders' Employment Needs

- Knowledge of the job market, job availability, one stops, and how to match offenders' abilities to available jobs.
- Ability to teach life skills, interviewing for a job, and good work habits.
- Understanding education/career/vocational assessment and the needs of offenders.
- More innovation and creativity to make the academic curriculum fit the real world workplace. They need to be in touch with their field's technology and receptive to change.
- Knowledge of addictions, reasons for relapse, etc.
- Knowledge of how to prepare inmates for the workplace while in prison and help them develop a step-by-step plan they can use when released.
- An attitude that shows sensitivity, a positive view of people, an understanding of human nature, and a belief that everyone can succeed.
- Basic counseling skills.
- Ability to create among inmates a positive attitude toward work, help them develop reality-based employment plans, and help them find jobs that have a future.

Summary of Focus Group and Survey Results

Focus group participants and respondents to the survey generally believe:

- Major shifts in thinking at higher administrative levels are required before significant change can occur.
- There is no overarching vision about what should be occurring during incarceration. Staff members are aware of what they do as individuals but do not see their roles as part of a bigger picture, either in the institution or in the lives of offenders. Separate programs and competing priorities make it difficult to provide a holistic approach to services.
- Development of offenders for the workforce does not appear to be a high priority within the corrections system. Only small percentages of offenders are in vocational classes or other career-related activities.
- Many offenders enter corrections facilities with few basic skills and almost no life or marketable skills. Poor cognitive development and an inability to find and use information make it difficult for them to understand themselves, the workplace, or "how things work" in society at large.
- Offenders released from prison often have every intention of improving their lives but have not acquired the requisite knowledge and skills.
- Many offenders are expected to "make it on their own" following release from prison, with little support or aftercare. Not knowing how to do anything else, they quickly revert to companions and behaviors that led to their incarceration. As one repeat offender put it, "I wanted to do better but didn't know how. I just knew how to sell drugs."
- Necessary resources should be committed to developing offenders for the workforce as an integral part of their criminal justice system experience, from their first contact with the system to aftercare programs following release from supervision. All elements of the system should value and assist development of offenders for gainful employment and help them plan and achieve relevant goals.

Appendix B
Training Participants' Self-Reported Increase in Skills

Participants in the three Offender Employment Specialist training programs held in Longmont, Colorado, and the one program held in Seattle, Washington, rated their increase in knowledge in specific skill areas as a result of the training. The skill areas measured and the average percentage increases reported are summarized here in descending order.

Overall Results

Skill Area	Increase
Providing job retention skill programs	31%
Marketing offenders in the community	31%
Providing pre-employment and job readiness skill programs	25%
Job Development	24%
Job Placement	24%
Coordinating use of community resources	24%

Results from Each Program

The October 18-23, 1998, program resulted in a 32% overall increase in participants' skills.

Providing job retention skill programs	38%
Marketing offenders in the community	35%
Providing pre-employment and job readiness skill programs	32%
Job Placement	30%
Job Development	29%
Coordinating use of community resources	29%

The February 7-12, 1999, program resulted in a 33% overall increase in participants' skills.

Providing job retention skill programs	38%
Marketing offenders in the community	36%
Job Development	34%
Providing pre-employment and job readiness skill programs	31%
Job Placement	29%
Coordinating use of community resources	29%

The May 16-21, 1999, program resulted in a 23% overall increase in participants' skills.

Marketing offenders in the community	31%
Providing job retention skill programs	24%
Coordinating use of community resources	22%
Job Placement	21%
Job Development	20%
Providing pre-employment and job readiness skill programs	20%

The September 13-17, 1999, Seattle program resulted in a 17% overall increase in participants' skills.

Marketing offenders in the community	22%
Providing job retention skill programs	22%
Job Placement	16%
Providing pre-employment and job readiness skill programs	15%
Job Development	14%
Coordinating use of community resources	14%